



Drought in Scottsdale

Frequently Asked Questions

The local media regularly runs stories related to drought in Arizona. These articles can raise questions on how drought affects Scottsdale's water supplies and what we are doing to assure you always have a safe, reliable supply of water at your home or business.

Q: What is drought?

A: "Drought", as defined by Salt River Project, is a prolonged period of less-than-normal precipitation the impacts, or may impact water supplies. Typically, drought also affects the health of vegetation and wildlife within the area impacted by the dry conditions.

Q: Is Scottsdale currently in a drought?

A: Yes. The 2012 run-off season on the Salt and Verde river watersheds recorded by SRP was the 16th driest on record. However, SRP's reservoirs are still in good shape and are doing exactly what they were designed to do - capturing runoff in a wet year, such as 2010, and storing it for the dry years such as 2011 and 2012.

Q: Should I be concerned about our water supplies?

A: Scottsdale is in good shape with our water supplies because we've planned ahead and invested wisely to meet our future water needs. It's important to remember that we are located in the desert and are always vulnerable to drought and the impacts of little rainfall. Being a desert community means that we've been forced to plan ahead so we can respond more quickly to dry conditions than other locations where water has been abundant and taken for granted.

Q: What does Scottsdale get their water?

A: The majority of Scottsdale's water supplies come from the Colorado, Salt and Verde rivers. Approximately 70 to 75% of our drinking water comes from the Colorado River through the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal. Another 15% comes from Salt River Project and the Salt and Verde rivers. The remaining water comes from groundwater pumped from city-owned wells.

Having various water sources in our portfolio gives us many options to respond if one source is not available. Scottsdale's groundwater supplies help protect against drought if there are surface water supply challenges. We will only use additional groundwater supplies if there are no other renewable surface water supplies available.

Q: What is Scottsdale doing to prepare for drought?

A: Scottsdale has many innovative programs and procedures in place to help prepare and plan for drought conditions.

- We are currently reducing our groundwater pumping and using surface water whenever possible. This helps us protect and live in harmony with the Sonoran desert. Our goal is to replace any groundwater that is pumped from our wells with "recharged" water. This goal was set for all users in the Phoenix area by the Arizona Department of Water Resources.
- Our state-of-the-art Water Campus treats all wastewater to drinking water standards. It is then provided to all golf courses north of Indian Bend Road. More than 97% of the water treated at the Water Campus is re-used for irrigation purposes or recharged to replenish the water table.
- Scottsdale was the first city to institute a "water resources acquisition fee" which is a dedicated funding source to purchase surface water and develop other renewable supplies. Since 1987, every new development in Scottsdale has paid this fee. This has allowed us to more than double our available surface water supplies.

Q: Why are the golf courses so lush and green?

A: We work closely with every golf course in Scottsdale and have developed and implemented numerous strategies to minimize the impact they have on our water supplies. A large majority of golf courses north of Frank Lloyd Wright Boulevard receive reclaimed water (or highly treated wastewater) to irrigate their turf. This Reclaimed Water Distribution System is the largest system of its kind in the Valley and is separate from our water and sewer systems. City Council has also directed all future golf courses must provide their own renewable water supply before being built in Scottsdale.

Q: Does Scottsdale have any water restrictions in place?

A: Currently, Scottsdale does not need to implement any type of mandatory water use restrictions since our available supplies meet our customers' needs and demands. We continually assess our internal water use and implement ways to reduce consumption without affecting service to you. We also aggressively promote voluntary water conservation techniques year-round since we live in a dry climate. Water conservation should be a lifestyle for everyone living in the Sonoran Desert.

Q: What type of water conservation programs does Scottsdale offer?

A: Scottsdale's Water Conservation Office offers a variety of programs and services to both residential and commercial customers including:

- A series of free landscape workshops twice a year providing residents many opportunities to learn how to make the most of their water use in our desert environment
- A variety of rebates from new plumbing fixture rebates to turf removal
- Free water conservation programs to local schools
- Free outdoor water use evaluations for both residential and large-turf commercial customers (including HOA's)
- "How-to" videos on how to monitor your monthly water use and check for leaks indoors and outdoors

Water Conservation staff also host and attend hundreds of valley-wide events each year promoting Scottsdale's water conservation programs.

Recently, Scottsdale updated its water rate structure to provide a additional financial incentives for water conservation. The updated structure took effect July 1st, 2012. Customers now pay for the amount of water they use. The more you use, the more you pay.

To learn more about water conservation and all the programs offered by Water Resources, please visit www.scottsdaleaz.gov/water/conservation

Q: What has Scottsdale, as a whole, done to conserve water?

A: Each department in the city has done their part to reduce water consumption in city buildings, facilities and parks. For example:

- The city's truck wash recycles the water instead of letting it run down the drain
- Restrooms in city facilities have low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets
- The Parks Department has successfully implemented numerous strategies and has reduced its water use by 1.3 billion gallons by:
 - Training employees annually on proper irrigation and water management techniques
 - Monitoring park water usage monthly
 - Performing regular preventive maintenance on irrigation equipment
 - Performing detailed water audits when water usage issues occur
 - Discontinued overseeding for winter grass unless it's required by contractual obligations
 - Replacing 271,000 sq. ft. of grass (approximately 5 football fields) with Xeriscape

Learn more about the Parks Department's water saving efforts at www.scottsdaleaz.gov/Water/Conservation/CityWide/FAQParksWaterUse